IN THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel Claim 13 without prejudice or disclaimer of subject matter. Please amend Claims 1 to 7, 12 and 14 as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, read as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A storage unit which is detachable from an information processing apparatus having ejecting means for ejecting the storage unit, ~~and~~ ~~has~~ the storage unit having a storage medium for storing data from the information processing apparatus, ~~and a communication interface with the information processing apparatus,~~ comprising:

a controller for controlling storage of data into the storage medium;

receiving means for receiving an eject instruction to eject ~~of ejecting~~ the storage unit from the information processing apparatus;

judging means for judging whether or not the storage unit is in an ejectable state; and

output means for ~~externally~~ outputting an eject permission signal to the information processing apparatus for ejecting the storage unit by said ejecting means if said judging means judges that the storage unit is in the ejectable state.

2. (Currently Amended) The unit according to claim 1, ~~wherein the storage unit further comprises:~~ further comprising state shift means for shifting the storage unit to the ejectable state when the eject instruction is received by said receiving means,

~~and~~ wherein said judging means judges that the storage unit is in the ejectable state after completion of the shift to the ejectable state by said state shift means,

and wherein said output means externally outputs an eject permission signal to the ejecting means of the information processing apparatus if said judging means judges that the storage unit is in the ejectable state.

3. (Currently Amended) The unit according to claim 2, wherein said state shift means inhibits reception of an external input ~~to the communication interface~~, and executes cache memory ~~flash~~ flush processing.

4. (Currently Amended) The unit according to claim 1, wherein said outputmeans uses an extra signal line ~~in the communication interface~~.

5. (Currently Amended) The unit according to claim 1, wherein said receiving means receives an eject command as the eject instruction ~~via the communication interface~~.

6. (Currently Amended) The unit according to claim 1, wherein said receiving means receives a status of an operation switch as the eject instruction via an extra signal line ~~in the communication interface~~.

7. (Currently Amended) The unit according to claim 1, wherein said receiving means further comprises:

switch receiving means for receiving a status of an operation switch; and

notification means for notifying the information processing apparatus ~~via the communication interface~~ of an operation status of the operation switch on the basis of the status of the operation switch that is received by said switch receiving means.

8. (Previously Presented) The unit according to claim 2, wherein

said receiving means can receive, as the eject instruction, an eject command issued by the information processing apparatus and a signal from an operation switch, and

when the signal from the operation switch is received as the eject instruction, said state shift means shifts the storage unit to the ejectable state at end of data communication between the information processing apparatus and the storage unit.

9. (Original) The unit according to claim 6, wherein the operation switch is arranged in the storage unit.

10. (Previously Presented) An information processing apparatus which allows detaching a storage unit defined in claim 1, comprising:

providing means for providing a user interface;

issuing means for issuing the eject instruction to the storage unit in accordance with user operation to the user interface; and

eject means for ejecting the storage unit on the basis of the eject permission signal which is output from the storage unit in accordance with the eject instruction.

11. (Previously Presented) An information processing apparatus which allows detaching a storage unit defined in claim 7, comprising:

monitoring means for inquiring of the storage unit as to a status of the operation switch, and monitoring a status signal representing the status of the operation switch;

issuing means for issuing the eject instruction to the storage unit in accordance with user operation to a user interface provided by software or the status signal; and

eject means for ejecting the storage unit on the basis of the eject permission signal which is output from the storage unit in accordance with the eject instruction.

12. (Currently Amended) An eject control method for a storage unit which is detachable from an information processing apparatus having ejecting means for ejecting the storage unit, ~~and has~~ the storage unit having a storage medium for storing data from the information processing apparatus, ~~a communication interface with the information processing apparatus~~ and a controller for controlling storage of data into the storage medium, comprising:

~~a providing step of causing the information processing apparatus to provide a user interface;~~

a receiving step of receiving, by the storage unit, an eject instruction to eject the storage unit from the information processing apparatus;

~~an issuing step of issuing an eject instruction to the storage unit in accordance with user operation to the user interface;~~

a judging step of judging, by the storage unit, whether or not the storage unit is in an ejectable state; and

~~a state shift step of shifting the storage unit to an ejectable state in accordance with the eject instruction issued in the issuing step;~~

an output step of ~~causing the storage unit to output~~ outputting, from the storage unit, an eject permission signal to the information processing apparatus for ejecting the storage unit by said ejecting means if said judging step judges that the storage unit is in the ejectable state ~~after completion of shifting the storage unit to the ejectable state in the state shift step, in accordance with the eject instruction; and~~

~~an eject step of causing the information processing apparatus to eject the storage unit on the basis of the eject permission signal~~.

13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) A housing apparatus which allows detaching a storage unit defined in claim 1, and which can be connected to an information processing ~~a computer~~ apparatus, comprising:

an interface which realizes data communication between the storage unit and the ~~computer~~ information processing apparatus;

transmission means for transmitting the eject instruction from the ~~computer~~ information processing apparatus to the storage unit; and

an eject mechanism which ejects the storage unit in accordance with the eject permission signal from the storage unit.

15. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the apparatus further comprises:

an eject designation switch,

wherein said transmission means transmits the eject instruction to the storage unit in accordance with operation of said eject designation switch.